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ABSTRACT

An implicit contract between author and reader during discourse production and comprehension that defines the liberties each may take in relation to the text is proposed in this report. Discussed in the report are the writer's responsibilities in such a contract--to be sincere, informative, relevant, and clear and to establish points of contact between the communication and the reader's experience. Also discussed are the reader's responsibilities, including the selection of a fitting text that generates meanings that do not distort the author's message, bringing to the text conceptualizations that support a reasonable interpretation of the text rather than result in an abandonment of the author's message, employing strategies that are sensitive to the purposes of the text, responding to the text as it exists in context rather than apart from it, and recognizing that a text represents an author's viewpoint. It is recommended that teachers use the notion of "contract" as a frame from which to explore and encourage effective communication. Appended to the report is a linguist's response to the idea of "contract" that supports adding correct grammar usage and discourse fluency to the writer's list of responsibilities, and a teacher's view that exploring a variety of responses to text material works only with literature or creative writing texts and not with expository writing where students need to learn to restrict their interpretations. (AEA)

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Reading Education Report No. 15

THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF READERS AND WRITERS: A CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT*

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The Rights and Responsibilities of Readers and Writers: A Contractual Agreement

This paper is addressed to anyone who is either a reader or writer and especially to all of those who teach reading or writing. Its intent is to clarify some important points about the rights and responsibilities of readers and writers. The paper is prompted by the belief that there exists an implicit allowability contract governing the role of writers during discourse production and readers during discourse comprehension. Assuming that there is at least an attempt made by an author to communicate a message, and by a reader to interpret that message, it then seems reasonable to assume that there is an implicit contract between author and reader--a contract which defines what is allowable vis à vis the role of each in relation to the text.

In brief, it is our belief that if author-reader-text relationships are framed in terms of a contractual agreement, the liberties which an author may take while producing a text and that a reader may take while interpreting a text become more clearly defined. Indeed, we argue that meaning is sacrificed whenever an author or reader fail to abide by the terms of their contract. To this end, the present paper explores the nature of this contract and what it entails for authors, readers, and those involved in teaching reading or writing.

Toward Defining the Contract: The Author's Role

Based upon examinations of the composing process, researchers such as Britton (1978), Cooper and Courts (1978), Gibson (1969), Kinneavy (1971),

and Moffett (1968) suggest that written language is not primarily a means of expressing one's own thoughts, but rather a means of directing others to construct similar thoughts from their own prior knowledge. These researchers describe the bounds within which writers express themselves with reference to Aristotle's notion that effective persuasion requires the writer to establish a plausible ethos, or voice, create a desired attitude in the audience, and demonstrate the truth. Toward defining the terms of a contractual agreement based upon this argument, it seems reasonable to suggest that authors have a responsibility to their audience--a responsibility which necessitates that written communications be relevant, sincere, and worthwhile.

As Pratt (1978) has proposed in a recent book titled Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse, writers are bound by a principle similar to that which operates in the context of conversation. Namely, there exists a cooperative principle between speakers and listeners--a principle which entails that speakers should be informative, sincere, relevant, and perspicuous (Grice, 1975). In the context of conversation, these theorists suggest that voids in the agreement between speaker and listener can be prevented by nonverbal cues or turn-taking, e.g., a listener wrinkles his or her brow or asks that a speaker clarify what would appear to be an ambiguous statement. The author-reader situation, however, offers no such mechanism for preventing voids in the author-reader agreement. Instead, an author must predict the intentions and background of experience of his or her audience. If the author's predictions do not mesh with the reader, then the text the author has written may be deemed by its readers irrelevant, insincere, uninformative,

ambiguous, or obscure; and it is likely the contract will be voided. Symptomatic of this void, readers will likely criticize the author for being ambiguous, express an unwillingness to address the author's message, or misinterpret what has been written. It is as if the reader would posit that the author has violated the terms of their contractual transaction.

Instances of contractual voids are common. We have all, as readers, either tacitly or consciously judged an author to be insincere, irrelevant, or ambiguous. Suppose we had extended the previous paragraph to include the following sentences:

> . . . . It is as if the reader posits that the author has violated terms of their contractual transaction. From an artist's perspective, critics must attend to the task.

As a reader you might have considered this statement one of the following: (a) an example of literary license; (b) information to be fitted into your developing interpretation (e.g., maybe you would relate the artist to a writer and the critic to a reader); and (c) irrelevant prose which should be dismissed due to its failure to provide a referent for "task." If, indeed, the author was being haphazard, and if the reader was proceeding piecemeal, statement by statement, then it would seem reasonable that readers might regard the information trite and the author insincere. Alternatively, suppose a text was made deliberately ambiguous. Several researchers in pursuit of the influence of reader perspective upon comprehension have presented readers with texts without titles, and texts which support a number of distinct interpretations. As Carey and Harste (Note 1) have shown, readers of such texts are often angered and frustrated by the writer's

apparent ambiguity, and confused by what they perceive to be a lack of responsibility on the part of the writer.

From a writer's perspective, then, it is our argument that integral to meaningful verbal learning from text is an author's respect for his or her audience. This position is consistent with the notion of a good structure contract described in a recent report by Adams and Bruce (in press) which suggests that an author must project the reader's goals, beliefs, and background knowledge as well as his or her potential purposes for reading a text. It is also consistent with Britton's argument:

> The writer . . . . having in mind the reader addressed, must try to envisage the initial preoccupations with which that reader will approach the task, since these preoccupations provide the context into which a text is fitted. (1978, p. 20)

This suggests that writers must establish a reader-writer interaction which sets up "a coherent movement" toward a reasonable interpretation of a communication. An author, accountable in one sense to a selected audience of readers and in another sense to a message deemed worth their consideration, will do greater justice to that message, if the needs of readers are attended. If such a notion was written in contractual terms it might be stated as follows:

> Whereas, a writer is concerned with communicating information to an intended audience . . . .
>
> a writer has a responsibility to be sincere, informative, relevant, and clear.
>
> Whereas, a writer's audience has a certain background of experience, interest and reference points in common with the writer . . .
>
> a writer has a responsibility to establish points of contact between the communication and the reader's experience.

Extending the Contract: The Reader's Role

The role of the reader follows directly from the contractual terms established for a writer. Namely, a reader should assume that a writer communicates for a certain purpose(s) to a certain audience. This implies that readers need to consider for what and for whom a particular text is intended. Certainly many texts can extend beyond the specific audience and purposes for which they were originally intended. That is, most text are sufficiently robust to be read by a wide audience, for various reader purposes. However, if a reader and his purposes are quite unlike that intended by the author, and if the text is not sufficiently robust to support a wide audience and diverse reader purposes, then the reader should not assume that a contract between writer and reader has been effected. For example, if within a text a writer describes the changing color of leaves, but chooses not to address how they change, a reader should not elect to read that text for the latter purpose. If, on the other hand, despite the author's intent, the text is sufficiently robust to allow for alternate reader purposes, it might be read for such purposes. It is as Tierney and Spiro (1979) describe: ". . . . the author makes a contract with the reader and the reader makes a contract with the author. But this does not mean both agree to the same terms."

Along this line of reasoning, a contractual agreement between reader and writer is most tenable when reader and author agree to the same terms. Realistically a reader-writer agreement is effected whenever a text is sufficiently robust to allow a reader's purpose and background of experience to fit with a particular text; it is as if there exists a

band or variety of permissable reader purposes and interpretations. For, despite the fact that an author may intend that a text convey a particular meaning, readers bring to a text idiosyncratic perspectives which, at least in part, account for the degree to which their interpretations are in consonance with the author's intended message. It is most likely, then, that readers will include in their accounts of text not only that which is specified in a text, but also that which is not stated in a text. As Kintsch (in press) suggests "meaning is something the reader creates in response to the text, not something directly given." The text, therefore, rather than bearing meaning explicitly, represents meaning or cues to meaning. The author, in producing a text, rather than merely transmitting thoughts in words to a page, makes assumptions about what the reader will generate and can be expected to generate. And the reader, constructing an interpretation which is plausible and complete, selectively uses the author's cues; indeed, we posit that the nature of a reader's interpretation reflects the extent to which the author has lived up to his/her part of the contractual agreement and/or the extent to which the reader made appropriate use of the author's cues.

The notion of accuracy is integral to the issue of interpretation. Empirical evidence suggests that during text interpretation, accuracy becomes a function of numerous constraints including: the extent to which readers bring their knowledge to the text; the nature of the knowledge readers bring to the text; the purposes for which readers use the text; the reader's perceptions of the author's purposes for the text; the nature of both text content and structures; and the purposes and conditions which lead readers

to formulate an interpretation (Anderson & Ortony, 1975; Anderson, Reynolds, Schallert, & Goetz, 1977; Anderson, Spiro, & Anderson, 1978; Spiro, 1977; Meyer, 1977). It is as if one must forego considering the concept of a single interpretation to be either viable or desirable. That is, one may or should talk about the relativity of accuracy of understanding. For indeed, readers responses portray a band of interpretations and the accuracy or relativity of their responses are a statement about the nature of reader-text interactions.

Across readers, then, it would seem that there exists a permissible band of interpretations reflecting varying degrees of reader-based and text-based processing (Tierney & Spiro, 1979). Consider the wide band of reader-based and text-based interpretations possible for Andy and the Lion by James Daugherty (1938). As the story opens, Andy has

> started down to the library to get a book about lions. He took the book home and read and read. Andy read through supper and he read all evening and just before bedtime his grandfather told him some tall stories about hunting lions in Africa . . . . That night Andy dreamed all night that he was in Africa hunting lions . . . .

As the story continues, Andy encounters a lion on his way to school the following morning, and thus begins Daugherty's tale of "bravery and friendship." As the story draws to a close, Andy once again starts down to the library, this time to return the book.

A reader who interprets this tale largely from what has been explicitly related in the text may choose to accept Andy's adventure as something that could actually happen to a boy on his way to school. A second reader who,

while remaining close to the text, brings his knowledge of what is real and what is make-believe to the text may interpret Andy's encounter to have been realistic, but only in the context of a story. A third reader, who chooses to base his or her interpretation on a knowledge of how stories proceed, as well as the notion of "imagination," may view Andy's adventure as something Andy either dreamt or imagined after having read a book about lions. The point is Daugherty's text affords a variety of interpretations which might be considered reasonable. As an aside, the fact that Daugherty's text supports any one of these interpretations may account, in part, for the story's enduring quality. Quite possibly it is the text's interpretative band which allows it to grow with its readers.

One is less likely to find such a wide band of possible interpretations in certain expository text. Consider the following text being read by a science student:

> The experiment that you are about to do deals with a property of light. For this experiment you'll need a penny, a cup, transparent tape, and a pitcher of water.
>
> To perform the experiment, tape the penny to the bottom of the cup. Move your head to a point just beyond where you can see the penny.
>
> Hold your head still, then slowly pour water into the cup. Be sure not to move your head.
>
> Stop pouring if the penny comes into view.

Here the band of possible and permissible interpretations seems rather restricted. To either explain or perform the experiment adequately, any interpretation which is too divergent would not be viable. Consequently, the science student who takes too many liberties with the text (that is to

say, interprets the text too freely, or loosely) may err in his or her performance of the experiment regardless of how well he or she thinks the text has been addressed. Efficient readers, then, should vary their treatment of text in light of purposes, knowledge, availability of that knowledge, content of the author's message, and the accessibility of that message. In terms of the contractual agreement, the reader should not so completely overlook the purposes for which the text was designed as to result in inappropriate inferences, unjustified criticism of the author, or an unwillingness to address the communication. This does not deny that a reader has the right to use a text for purposes other than those intended. However, the extent to which a reader is reader-based or text-based should take into account both the needs of the reader as well as the intentions the author holds for a text.

We might best account for the discussion to this point in the following contractual terms:

> Whereas, it is the right of a reader to explore text for the purposes of generating meaning, as opposed to restricting his/her interaction with text . . . .
>
> it is the responsibility of a reader to select text which fits his/her purposes and generate meanings which neither misstate nor distort the author's message.
>
> Whereas, it is the right of a reader to engage aspects of his background in order that a plausible text interpretation can be generated . . . .
>
> it is the responsibility of a reader to bring to a text conceptualizations which support a reasonable interpretation of the text rather than result in an abandonment of the author's message.

> Whereas, it is the right of a reader to engage those strategies which, as purpose, background, etc., may dictate, would appropriately enhance his/her learning from the text . . . .
>
> it is the responsibility of a reader to employ those strategies which are sensitive to the purposes for which the text was designed and elected to be read.

It would be difficult at this point to completely separate the reader's role as a critic or evaluator from the reader's process of interpretive response. For strategically, interpretive response requires that a reader consider new information in terms of that which he/she may already know, as well as use new concepts to reevaluate his/her existing states of understanding. In one sense, one might describe readers' critical efforts as constituting the "turn" they, as a member of an author's audience, have relinquished. It may be in this context that reading more closely resembles conversational exchanges. In any case, despite the right of a reader to evaluate the author's message, the validity of such a critique lies in the extent to which it takes into account the assumptions and purposes surrounding the text.

Consider the following excerpt taken from a short story by Norton Juster (1961) entitled, "The Royal Banquet." The author sets up the tale with a brief introductory statement:

> The boy Milo and the watchdog Tock arrived in the city of Dictionopolis in the Kingdom of Wisdom in time for the royal banquet. Dictionopolis was the city where all the words in the world grew on trees, and it was ruled by Azaz, the unabridged King.
>
> Preparations for the banquet had been made, and Milo and Tock were to be escorted by the King's Cabinet: The Duke of Definition, The Minister of Meaning, The Court of Connotation, The Earl of Essence and the Undersecretary of Understanding. (p. 384)

The action begins with the dialogue:

> "The Royal Banquet is about to begin," said the King's cabinet members.
> "Come with us."
> "But what about our car?" said, Milo.
> "Don't need it," replied the Duke.
> "No use for it," said the Minister.
> "Superfluous," advised the Count.
> "Unnecessary," stated the Earl.
> "Uncalled for," cried the Undersecretary. "We'll take our vehicle."
> "Conveyance."
> "Rig."
> "Char-a-banc."
> "Buggy."
> "Brougham."
> "Shandrydan," they repeated quickly in order, and pointed to a small wooden wagon. (p. 384)

One could expect readers to respond to the above text in a variety of ways. After reading the author's introductory statement, one reader may find the text consistent with his or her expectations; while a second reader may criticize it for being unduly redundant. In terms of the second reader, it is as if the reader assumes the author's redundancy has violated the author's agreement to be relevant. But if such a criticism were examined against some of the assumptions and purposes for which the text was written, the reader, and not the author, may have been irresponsible. Speculating somewhat, it would not seem unreasonable to suggest that the author assumed: (a) his or her readers are familiar with dictionaries, what they are, and the nature and function of their content; (b) these readers have been previously exposed to literature in the form of fantasy and would not be surprised, but more likely expect, the "outrageous"; (c) a story setting is appropriate for

purposes of developing readers' understanding and appreciation of the dictionary; and/or (d) the text will allow its readers to explore and enjoy the "power" of words. In the context of these assumptions, one could argue that the reader, not the author, had violated terms of their contractual agreement. As Pratt (1978) has pointed out in reference to literary works:

> Far from being autonomous, self-motivating, context-free objects which exist independently from the "pragmatic" concerns of "everyday" discourse, literary works take place in a context, and like any other utterance they cannot be described apart from that context. Whether or not literary critics wish to acknowledge this fact--and they sometimes have not--a theory of literary discourse must do so. (p. 115)

We might consider critical response contractually as follows:

> Whereas, it is the right of a reader to critically evaluate a text message . . . .
>
> it is the responsibility of a reader to respond to text as it exists within context rather than apart from it.

We have suggested the existence of a contractual agreement between a text's author and its audience of readers. There would have been little need to consider the terms of such an agreement were it not for two rights which are all too frequently overlooked: the right of an author to produce text, and the right of a reader to read text. For while a text is as much an idiosyncratic interpretation as readers' accounts of text, authors have the right to share their interpretations of the world, and readers to seek them out. In order that the abuse of such rights be avoided, however, readers and authors must come to understand their role in relation to the text, and in so doing, acquaint themselves with the advantages, as well as limitations, of interaction at the written discourse level.

Whereas, it is the right of a reader to explore the world through the eyes of an author . . . .

it is the responsibility of a reader to recognize that a text represents an author's viewpoint.

Comments Addressed to Teachers of Writing and Reading

It has been the purpose of this paper to draw upon the notion of contract as it relates to the role of writers, the role of readers, and the nature of reader-writer relationships. Teachers of reading and writing may find the terms of agreement intuitively the most appealing aspect of our discussion. However, lest we detract from the various and sundry reasons for which a text is produced and comprehended, we must emphasize that it is not our intention to suggest those rights and responsibilities be used as yardsticks for scoring the acceptability of any performance or restricting the creativity of said performances by readers and writers. Rather, it is our hope that teachers will be prompted to entertain "contract" as a frame from which to explore and encourage effective communication.

Our discussion would seem to suggest the need for instruction which guides readers and writers to develop a sense of, and respect for, both authorship and readership. That is, we suggest an instructional setting that is capable of providing readers an opportunity to interact personally and idiosyncratically with authors or projected authors, and authors with their readers. What better environment for young readers and writers than one where understanding the relationship between author and reader is integral to their production and comprehension of text.

That the notion of contract be recognized as instructionally significant may well depend upon the extent to which teachers are willing to treat text production and comprehension as outcomes of interactive processing: to respect the right of their young writers to share, and the right of their young readers to interpret. Students have the right to know that, as readers, they are neither communicating with a text, nor a teacher's interpretation of a text, but with an author or authors, and as a writer with an audience of readers. Most importantly they have the right to know that they are a participant in this communication exchange, that as Robert Louis Stevenson (1925) noted:

> "It takes," says Thoreau, in the noblest and most useful passage to have read by any modern author, "two to speak truthfully--one to speak and another to hear." (p. 32).

Instructional settings which are sensitive to the notion of contractual agreement encourage writers to let their ideas take on a number of text forms; support the production of text for a variety of communicative purposes; and provide writers the opportunity to observe and interact with readers who have read and interpreted their text messages. Such settings encourage readers to interact personally with authors or projected authors, support readers appreciation of the value of their own ideas, and provide situations within which readers can explore with teachers and other readers the legitimacy of various text interpretations and purposes for reading. It implies that the teacher should avoid taunting either a single interpretation or a narrow band of text purposes.

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A Linguist's Response

Robert N. Kantor

My perspective on this paper is that of a theoretical linguist who has become concerned with the problems of reading and discourse generation and interpretation. My research has most recently focussed on apparent processing difficulties caused by poor writing or editing of texts intended for young readers. This research is reported in various forms in Kantor (1978), Davison, Kantor, Hannah, Hermon, Lutz, and Salzillo (forthcoming), Anderson, Armbruster, and Kantor (Note 1), and Kantor and Davison (Note 2). All of this research has uncovered violations of what Tierney and LaZansky term the "writer's contract."

What I would like to discuss here is not a large number of specific instances of violations of the writer's contract, but rather the instructional implications of recognizing that such violations do exist. Thus, my discussion here will concern the final section of the paper, "Comments Addressed to Teachers of Writing and Reading." More specifically, I will address my remarks to a single sentence, "Our discussion would seem to suggest the need for instruction which guides writers and readers to develop a sense of and respect for both authorship and readership." This quote is set within the context of a plea for flexibility on the part of teachers to allow readers to make varied interpretations of text and to encourage writers to expand their repertoire of text-producing abilities. On these points I am in complete agreement with Tierney and LaZansky.

What I believe is missing from the paper entirely, however, is a discussion of the preconditions on a text such that some reasonable interpretation

of the text may be attained. The failure of a writer to meet these preconditions leads to what I term "inconsiderateness" towards the reader. In what follows, I will discuss what I mean by "inconsiderateness" and what I believe to be the responsibilites of the writer, the reader, and the teacher of reading and writing with respect to this notion.

Grammar

The kind of inconsiderateness most immediately noticeable in a text is that of ungrammaticality of sentences, or of improper punctuation which may lead the reader to incorrectly understand or not understand a sentence. Strictly speaking errors of these sorts will not necessarily prevent the reader from getting a reasonable interpretation of a text. However, grammatical and punctuation errors place a burden on the reader, who expects the text to be constructed in general accordance with prescriptive rules for written prose. Many students do not master the written code, especially complex sentence structure, even by the time they enter college (see Perlman, 1978, for numerous examples). The conclusion that must be drawn, I believe, is that the teaching of grammar has not been very effective, at least for the more complex syntactic structures.

What I want to suggest for teachers of English and of writing is that grammar itself can be taught from the standpoint of a contract. A student writer can be told, for example, that while he or she can indeed understand what is meant by the sentence, I went over to a friend's place, whose name was Billy, a reader is usually quite literal-minded and will understand this sentence in accordance with certain conventions, here that relative clauses modify head nouns, not modifiers of these nouns. The point here

is not to tell a reader that a sentence is ungrammatical, but rather to illustrate to the reader that in its current form the message to be conveyed might not get conveyed.

On the other side of the grammaticality coin is the reader's responsibility not to give up on a sentence which, at first blush, looks meaningless or ungrammatical. For example, the sentence, The horse used to pull the wagon is in the barn, might pose a problem for a reader who interprets used to as the main verb of the sentence. The reader who makes such an interpretation should not give up on the sentence as meaningless when he or she encounters the verb is. Rather the reader must, at least temporarily, give the author credit for trying to communicate something, and must go back and try to reprocess the sentence. It is not necessarily the responsibility of the writer to insure that situations like the one just discussed will not arise. Every human language is remarkable in the way that it lets us communicate a great variety and range of meanings in a short amount of time. But this brevity which language allows can and will introduce temporary ambiguities, and it is simply impossible for an author or editor to be able to predict all possible understandings of a sentence (intended or not) that a reader might come up with, especially when individual factors like background knowledge and attention of the reader are involved. Thus, if a reader cannot make sense out of a sentence, he or she must investigate whether the writer has produced a misleading sentence, or whether the reader him/herself has not put enough effort into understanding.

Discourse Flow

So much for grammar. That is a basic that no educator would deny is important, at least for writers. But there is, I believe, another basic set of skills required for considerate writing. These skills have to do with what might be termed discourse flow factors. I use flow factors as a cover term for text characteristics related to the reader's need to connect sentences into a meaningful whole in some reasonably quick and efficient way.

One flow factor that has been traditionally recognized by teachers of composition is that of reference. Writers usually know what they mean when they state This shows that . . . . But more often than not the reader does not know the scope of reference of the demonstrative this, and a composition teacher might mark such a reference as "vague" or "ambiguous."

There are many other flow factors which writers are not taught and which many composition teachers may not note but which may cause readers annoyance. Here are some examples, taken from real texts for children:
(a) use of a definite article to refer to something which to the writer is obvious, but which has not been introduced into the discourse for the reader, e.g.,

> On the southern coast of Puerto Rico is a lagoon that contains one of the greatest amounts of bioluminescence in the world. On dark nights, it creates a very dramatic display. As the motor launch takes visitors into the lagoon, curving lines of light . . .

b) having the facts, but putting them in a non-optimal order, e.g., not putting the premise first,

> Some kings realized that the cities and their workmen were opposed to the lords. The lords tried to keep their power by weakening the kings [=premise]. So, the kings began to favor the cities in order to weaken the power of the lords.

(c) failure to paragraph correctly, so that a misinterpretation of a sentence might take place, e.g.,

> Orantes is one of the best tennis players alive. In 1975 he won eight major titles in tennis matches all over the world. He earned over a quarter of a million dollars in winnings. Becoming a champion wasn't easy.
>
> Orantes was born in 1949 in Spain. His mother died when he was six months old . . . ,

where there is a good probability that a reader will start trying to process the last sentence of the first paragraph as the summary of the paragraph, rather than as the transition between the paragraphs.

These are but a few of the discourse flow problems I have found in looking at texts written for children by professional writers. One would expect to find many more of these disfluencies in students' writings. Notice that in all the examples given above, a reasonable message is present, but the <u>form</u> of the message causes difficulty. It would not serve a student well for the teacher to simply correct a disfluency like those in (a-c) above. Explanations can be discovered for why something which conveys a message is not rapidly understood, and students deserve to know why something misfires. The explanations for discourse disfluencies are, however, harder to provide than are explanations of ungrammaticality, for they involve bringing to the writer's consciousness the kinds of discourse

processes that a reader brings to bear. There are many opportunities for a teacher of writing to discover some of these flow factcrs for him/herself in the course of grading compositions and creative writing (as well as essay exams). If these factors are discovered and explained to the writer, the writer will be able to better understand something more about his or her obligations to the reader.

The reader also has some responsibilities with respect to the discourse flow similar to the responsibilities for understanding the structure of sentences. Take this example from a passage about fish farms:

> Fish could be kept all year round. The water could even be heated. Right now many power stations pump in cold water to cool their engines. Then they pump out the water, which is not hot. This once-useless hot water could warm the fish farms.

Upon reading the third sentence of the paragraph, the reader could decide that the paragraph makes no sense--what does a power station pumping in cold water have to do with keeping fish all year round and heating the water? But it needs to be brought to the reader's attention that you can not always immediately connect up one sentence with another, that you sometimes have to wait to get the full message.

Conclusion

Insuring grammaticality and discourse flow are as much a responsibility of the writer as those obligations mentioned by Tierney and LaZansky. What is most valuable about Tierney and LaZansky's paper is their notion of contract. I would argue that even the most mundane grammar exercises could be couched in terms of a contract of "considerateness" for a reader who has

certain expectations, rather than as grammar for grammar's sake. Teachers should explore with their students the effects of ungrammaticality and discourse disfluency on reading and bring to their students' consciousness this aspect of author-reader-text relationships.

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A Teacher's Response

Bonnie B. Armbruster

My reaction is directed primarily to the final section of the paper, "Comments Addressed to Teachers of Writing and Reading," which presents classroom implications of the notion of a reader-writer contractual agreement. I enthusiastically support Tierney's and LaZansky's intuitions that encouraging interactions between author and reader may be an effective way to build communication skills. However, I feel that the authors' general recommendations about the nature of these interactions need qualifying with respect to the type of text. In particular, I refer to the recommendations that teachers should "provide situations within which readers can explore . . . the legitimacy of various text interpretations and purposes for reading," and that "teachers should avoid taunting either a single interpretation or a narrow band of text purposes."

Teachers of literature or creative writing will probably feel quite comfortable with these recommendations, for literature has a wide band of permissible purposes and interpretations. Indeed, literature and creative writing classes are established forums for the kind of reader-writer interaction recommended. Students are often encouraged to speculate on the author's intentions, generate divergent interpretations, express their own individual perspectives, and provide feedback to other student writers.

When the discourse of interest is exposition rather than literature, however, I think that these recommendations need refining or altering. As Tierney and LaZansky point out earlier in the paper, the band of permissible interpretation of expository text is inherently quite restricted,

at least if the author is fulfilling his/her terms of the communication contract. In fact, it seems that the "better" the exposition, the more limited the range of possible interpretation. Even if the author's message allows some latitude of interpretation, the various school-related task demands (for example, answering questions at the ends of chapters and performing experiments) greatly restrict the viable interpretations. For example, usually only one rather narrow class of responses will be considered appropriate ("correct") for a given question.

Therefore, rather than encouraging students to explore "the legitimacy of various text interpretations," content area teachers may need to teach students to recognize the restrictions on expository text interpretation. Exploring "various purposes for reading" may entail learning to select the text interpretation that is appropriate for a particular task demand. With regard to the third recommendation, advocating "a single interpretation" and establishing "a narrow band of text purposes" (through specific objectives or questions, for instance) may be exactly what content area teachers should do. Furthermore, establishing a "narrow band of text purposes" is a cardinal principle expounded by teachers of expository writing.

Although I have argued that inherent differences between expressive and expository text may dictate different specific teaching strategies, I repeat my support for the general instructional approach of encouraging interactions between authors and readers. Such interactions using both literature and exposition may help sensitize students to the differences between the two discourse types, particularly the critical difference in the width of the band of permissible interpretations. Probably because

of my personal interest, I think the idea is especially promising for teaching expository writing skills. For example, young writers can get immdediate feedback concerning how well the purpose they intended was communicated to the reader as well as specific comments regarding the source of problems.

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